

Building Local Partnerships and Promotions

Building local partnerships with businesses and creating promotions are ideal ways to utilize resources in your community – to inform residents about safe use and disposal of household hazardous waste and to promote Roundups. Partnerships can be mutually beneficial, to both your city and the corporation. Forming these alliances can instill excitement, generate increased value and increase the credibility of your campaign. Following are a few tips on how you can secure corporate partnerships to benefit your city.

Who are potential campaign partners?

A corporate partner can be any community or corporate entity that can provide something of added value to your campaign -- something that you would otherwise not be able to bring to your campaign.

- A local retailer or service provider agreeing to distribute campaign collateral to its customers
- A corporation providing technical assistance to assist campaign efforts, or exhibit space at a high traffic event
- A community based organization (CBO) or nonprofit organization (NPO) placing articles in their newsletter, paycheck stub, on website or through in intranet to target employees and/or members

What are the benefits of securing local partnerships?

Partners effectively:

- Leverage your resources and maximize your budget
- Increase the reach and visibility of your campaign
- Reinforce strong working relationships between the public and private sectors

Nine important steps to securing a beneficial partnership

Step 1: Do your homework!

The first step in developing your strategy to secure corporate partners is homework. Here are some of the questions you should ask yourself before initiating the partnership process:

- How can the campaign benefit from having a corporate/community partner or partners? Assess what your needs are -- collateral distribution points, promotional support, an event site, volunteers -- and if they are one-time or ongoing resource needs
- Is this need worth pursuing a corporate/community partner, or should we utilize our existing budget/resources? The process to secure a partner can sometimes be prolonged -- make sure the end result justifies the time, energy and resources to go through the process
- Who has a track record for supporting issues, household hazardous waste other environmental issues, or the larger issue of public health? Whose primary membership, customer or employee base matches our campaign's targeted audience segments – whether it be “Neat Neighbors” or “Fix It Foul Ups?”

- What is this company going through at the moment -- are they facing a crisis that might slow down the decision-making process? Are they a young company that could use an opportunity to heighten their visibility and gain media coverage? Or, are they facing criticism for not focusing enough resources on a particular issue (e.g. the environment) -- and your campaign can provide them with an opportunity to do so

Step 2: Identify multiple opportunities for partnership

When you are asking for things other than money, you make it easier for the potential partner to say yes. Make sure your requests are cost-effective so the company doesn't have to dip into its own limited budgets and go through an exhaustive review/approval process. Be creative in coming up with ways that companies can participate in your campaign.

Partnership ideas include:

- ***In-kind support for design, printing and production*** -- do they have in-house resources that can print your campaign brochures? On-site technology experts that can help design or enhance your city's Web site? Or technical resources to produce a public service announcement?
- ***Donation of prizes and product*** -- from drinks for a local community cleanup event, to CDs and t-shirts for giveaways at a promotional event or a Roundup?
- ***Tagging existing advertising*** -- can they include the Project Pollution Prevention and Toxic.Free.Home logos and 1-888-CLEAN-LA hotline or www.888cleanla.com Web site on their print ads? Or at the end of their radio spots?
- ***Distribution points for collateral and promotional materials*** -- can they educate their employees by providing campaign materials (in employee newsletters, paycheck inserts, Intranet messages)? Or, distribute campaign information to their customers through billstuffers, in-store displays, joint mailings or messages on cash register tapes?
- ***Utilize existing communication vehicles*** -- can a joint mailing to community groups' members be pursued (e.g. chambers of commerce, local schools, civic groups, athletic associations, religious organizations)? Is the CBO/NPO willing to place an article in its news bulletin or make announcements at meetings/conventions? Can Project Pollution and Toxic.Free.Home messages be included on their Web sites? Are they willing to post signage or disseminate collateral at an event they are sponsoring?
- ***Ask for volunteers to staff an event or request an expert speaker.***
- ***Website links and tagging*** -- do they have a high-traffic Web site that can drive users to your city's Web site via a hyperlink? Can you tag the city's Web site with information about the campaign?
- ***Incentives*** -- are they willing to offer a discount or coupon to people who show up at a Roundup, other campaign events or promotions?
- ***Underwriting*** -- do they have funds available to donate to a local charity/community outreach program?

Step 3: Make a wishlist

Have ideas and even a "wishlist" of what you want from a potential partner, but don't have your plans totally "cooked." Leave the options open -- by bringing the company/organization into the

discussion you provide them with a sense of ownership. And the company/organization may have good ideas of its own on what they can provide your campaign with once they are engaged.

Step 4: Make sure your proposal makes good business sense and offers the opportunity to be a good corporate citizen

Remember that any company -- whether AT&T or Jimmy's Corner Deli -- is ultimately looking to improve their bottom line. How can I increase my profits? How can I expand my customer base? How will involvement in this campaign help my company meet its strategic business objectives?

When developing your corporate partner strategy, come up with a list of benefits that the partner may receive in return for their support and participation. The more you can quantify benefits, the better. Just make sure that you don't over promise and that you can really deliver the results.

Example benefits include:

- ***Value of on-air promotions*** -- if you recognize a corporate partner in a radio PSA or spot, you can show the value of air time.
- ***Inclusion of the logo/name in print advertising and radio spots, and on promotional materials*** (e.g. t-shirts) -- show how many people will receive the message from these materials.
- ***Mentions in media interviews and in media outreach tools*** (e.g. press releases, press kits)
- ***Sampling opportunities*** -- perhaps the company can distribute its product or service at a Roundup or other community event. Show the company how many people are expected to attend.
- ***Community visibility*** -- seek opportunities to position the company as a community leader, investing in its future -- and garner media coverage. Request that a representative of the company serve as an honorary committee member, or judge at a local contest.

Step 5: Who to pitch

Make sure you know who is the right person in the organization to pitch, and if your contact is the end decision-maker, or merely a first-step gatekeeper.

Pitching Tips:

- At a local retailer, the contact is probably the owner or manager
- At a larger company -- a national chain or high-profile corporation -- look first to the local or regional office. It may be a different contact at each company to approach -- possibly someone in marketing, public relations, special projects, community outreach or public affairs.
- At a CBO/NPO, try contacting the community outreach administrator or the volunteer coordinator
- A corporate giving executive is probably not the right choice -- they are primarily focused on the giving of money -- and your opportunities are more marketing- and community-focused

Step 6: The initial approach

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to recruiting corporate partners. If it's a warm lead -- someone you know -- it may be a phone call and a visit to the local organization or business. If it's a cold pitch, remember you have to be professional, but there is always room to have some fun and be creative.

Send an initial pitch letter to test the waters. If you do, be direct and to the point. Remember to touch on the following points:

- Who you are -- your campaign, your organization
- Your campaign's purpose -- primary objectives, target audiences
- Why you are writing -- opportunities for partnership
- Timing -- whether this is a one-time or ongoing request for involvement
- What benefits the partner will receive -- marketing value and community positioning
- Any campaign successes or proven track record
- Follow-up and next steps -- who will call, what background materials we can provide for further information

Step 7: Follow-up

Again -- there are no steadfast rules. Be diligent in your follow-up, but don't become a nuisance. Use your best judgement. Remember the value of pitching a company via voicemail -- just as you might pitch a journalist about an event or a news item. Set a date, and if you haven't received a response by that date, send a recent news clip, or a quick follow-up memo. Ultimately, if you don't receive a favorable response, move on. There are a multitude of potential campaign partners in your community -- so cast a wide net.

Step 8: Pay attention to details

If you are successful in securing a partner -- congratulations! But get it in writing. Depending on the size of the company/organization, they may have a standard letter of confirmation. If not, draft a brief letter of agreement that both you and the company can sign. Use your in-house legal department to review the document and make sure you are in compliance with any agency policies or guidelines.

Step 9: Relationship-building

- Make sure that you provide the partner with all the benefits to which you agreed -- whether that is signage at a Roundup or community event or participation in media interviews
- Recognize their support -- through a letter, proclamation or other public acknowledgment
- Send them copies of media clips providing coverage on your campaign
- Provide them with attendance numbers from the community event they sponsored
- And take the same care in building these long-term relationships as you would with the media -- make yourself a resource, take an interest in their activities and keep them apprised of your campaign -- and how they contributed to its success

Plan A Community or Promotional Event to Keep HHW Issues Top of Mind

HHW Roundups take place in different cities throughout Los Angeles County all year long. Why not plan a community cleanup event or develop a citywide promotion to keep Project Pollution Prevention and Toxic.Free.Home messaging top of mind in the community? Remember that you can work in tandem with the local city council or other local community or government groups to help plan and execute your event.

How to get started

Step 1: Establish a goal

Have a focus and stick to it. What do you want people to learn from the community event about the campaign?

Step 2: Relevancy

Make the event relevant to the audience you are addressing and use messages that will appeal to them. Give the community event local appeal, and make it easy for your community to relate to the issue.

Step 3: Target your audience

After you have identified your target audience, find a way to send out the message and encourage participation in the event. Will you be doing a mass mailing? Ask targeted groups for their mailing list. Determine what local magazines and newspapers, radio and television stations will most effectively reach your target audience.

Step 4: Select a spokesperson

Select a spokesperson or honorary spokesperson who is well known in the community and has some connection to environmental issues.

Step 5: Determine a budget

Determine what your budget is to implement a successful community event. Should you bring in community partners to offset the cost of the event?

How to reach your audience

Use targeted materials

Newspaper and magazine ads, public service announcements (PSAs) and news releases provide ways to inform your target audience about the upcoming event.

Talk to your audience

Local cable access programming or town meetings provide a great forum to get information to your audience. Repeat your campaign message in as many ways as possible. Give your

audience concise ways on how they can understand the issue. Give them ideas on how to become involved or learn more about the issue (e.g. how to properly store HHW, dispose of HHW at local Roundups or tips on other related environmental issues). Direct your audience to the 1-888-CLEAN-LA hotline or the www.888cleanla.com Web site to find additional information. If you are planning an event, be sure to provide the time and dates to secure as many participants as possible.

Get people talking

Get people talking about household hazardous waste and your campaign. Send news releases and brochures. Involve local businesses. Tell people how they can promote the campaign.

Involve local businesses

Local business such as grocery stores, retail stores, libraries, hospitals, civic groups, religious organizations or other businesses may be interested in your campaign. Talk to them about specific ways they can promote your message (see “Nine important steps to securing a beneficial partnership,” page X).

Suggested Promotional Activities:

Youth/school involvement

- *Art/Poster/Essay/Speech contests.* Hold an art contest on the theme of the campaign. Winning entries should be displayed in the media, on bulletin boards and in business store locations. Hold a speech contest on the topic and provide awards on the school or district level.

Community Involvement

- *Town Meetings.* During National Pollution Prevention Week or in April, during the month of Earth Day (April 22), hold an evening town meeting. Speakers can discuss the importance of pollution prevention and how it relates to the public health and safety of our families, communities and the environment.
- *Community Festival.* Conduct an environmental community festival or include a booth at an existing community festival.
- *Civic/Faith/Volunteer Group Involvement.* Coordinate speakers and dissemination of literature to these groups. Sponsor a competition or other promotion based activity.

Contact Businesses

- Conduct speaking engagements on work sites to inform employees about household hazardous waste. Disseminate literature on proper use, storage and disposal of HHW.

Media Involvement

- *News Release* -- send out a news release announcing your campaign activities.
- *Write Letters to the Editor and Op-eds* -- monitor stories printed in local publications regarding environmental issues. Develop targeted responses through Letters to the Editor and Op-eds to notify the community of your campaign activities.